(e) if so, the initiatives being considered by Government to check the corruption prevailing in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) The Prime Minister at the 21st Conference of the Accountants General had expressed grave concern at the leakage of public funds at implementation level and emphasised Government's commitment to fighting corruption and ensuring probity in administration and public life.

(c) The Prime Minister had emphasised the need for more transparency and had in this context welcomed the placing of Comptroller & Auditor General of India report on the internet.

(d) and (e) Comptroller & Auditor General of India is a constitutional authority vested with powers and responsibility for audit of the expenditure for the receipts into the Consolidated Fund of India and of each State and each Union Territory having a Legislative Assembly. Reports of Comptroller & Auditor General of India are laid in Parliament and the concerned Legislature of State by the concerned Governments. There are instructions to concerned Ministry in Central Government to furnish action taken notes on these reports (duly vetted by audit) to the Public Accounts Committee. A Monitoring Cell continuously monitors progress in this regard.

Action against tax defaulters

1784. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question No. 221 given in the Rajya Sabha on 25th July, 2000 and state:

(a) the action taken so far against defaulters listed therein;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "Send wilful defaulters to jail, says Sinha" appearing in the Pioneer dated the 15th July, 2001; and

(c) if so, whether Government are contemplating similar punitive action for the defaulters of corporate tax, customs duty and excise duty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) The action taken so far against major defaulters includes close monitoring of recovery action by tax authorities,

making efforts to get stays vacated and filing urgent hearing petitions in the Supreme Court and Appellate Tribunals for deciding the cases on priority basis.

(b) Government is aware of the news-item which appeared in the Pioneer dated 14th July, 2001.

(c) The Income Tax Act provides for arrest and detention of an assessee in prison in suitable cases, if the assessee is in default in making payment of taxes. In respect of customs duty, strict action is taken under Section 142 of the Customs Act, 1962 for recovery of sums due to the Government. Similarly, sufficient provisions have been made in Central Excise Law to recover the tax arrears. These include detaining of goods, and sale of movable and immovable properties of the defaulters.

Retrenchment in Central Customs and Excise Department

†1785. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether 5.2 per cent retrenchment of employees of Central Customs and Excise Department will be effected retrenching thereby 3600 employees out of 68761;

(b) whether this retrenchment would be effective on Class III and Class IV employees or on officers as well;

(c) whether it is an injustice to the lowly paid employees; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) No, Sir. However, the re-structuring plan of Customs and Central Excise Department approved by the Government envisages abolition of 3600 posts vacant or to fall vacant when existing incumbents are promoted or retire. There will be no retrenchment of existing staff.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Inflation in the Economy

†1786. SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the World Bank's assistance is becoming

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.